

IMPROVING STUDENT'S READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH QUESTION-ANSWER RELATIONSHIPS

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The article aims to discuss whether Question-Answer Relationships can improve the students' reading comprehension. The objectives of the prior research are: 1) Improving student's reading comprehension and to know the extent of the improvement of student's reading comprehension through Question Answer Relationships. 2) Describing the situation when Question-Answer Relationships is applied in reading class. The research was a classroom action carried out in SMP Negeri 8 Surakarta. The subject of the research is the eighth grade students. The research finding shows that the students who were taught Question-Answer Relationships can improve their reading comprehension. It can be seen in the result of their reading from preliminary observation up to cycle 2. There is improvement in each cycle. Therefore, Question-Answer Relationships can be used as alternative strategy to improve students' reading comprehension. Question-Answer Relationships also makes the class situation became effective during teaching and learning process.

Key words: question-answer relationships, reading comprehension

Artikel ini mempunyai tujuan untuk mendiskusikan apakah Question-Answer Relationships dapat meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa. Tujuan dari penelitian sebelumnya antara lain: 1) meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa dan mengetahui sampai mana peningkatan pemahaman membaca siswa melalui Question-Answer Relationships. 2) mendeskripsikan situasi saat Question-Answer Relationships diaplikasikan di kelas membaca. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian tindakan kelas yang dilaksanakan di SMP Negeri 8 Surakarta. Subyek penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas delapan. Hasil dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa yang telah diajar Question-Answer Relationships dapat meningkatkan pemahaman membacanya. Hal ini bisa dilihat dari hasil tes membaca siswa dari pre-observasi sampai dengan tes di siklus dua. Ada peningkatan pada tiap siklus. Oleh karena itu Question-Answer Relationships dapat digunakan sebagai strategi alternatif untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa. Question-Answer Relationships juga membuat situasi kelas lebih efektif saat proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran.

Kata kunci: question-answer relationships, pemahaman membaca

Language has important role in communication. People get language from habit, custom, and learning process. English is an important language in society and it is acceptable around the world. Many TVs, radio broadcast, international conference, etc are using English as its interpreting tools. English is needed not only in spoken but also in written activity. Books, references, journals and a lot of information can be found in English.

According to Catherine Wallace (1992: 1) reading as interpreting means reacting to a written text as a piece of communication. Book, advertisement, announcement, movie with subtitle are the kinds that need reading activity to get information from it. Burns, Roe, and Rosyys state that reading is the interpretation of the meaning of printed symbols (1984:20). When someone cannot derive meaning from a passage, he has not been reading even though he pronounces the words perfectly. Reading is not a simple activity; we do not only read the words but also understanding the meaning of a reading passage.

Comprehension is an action in understanding the text, both literal and implied as well as evaluating the author message, purpose and style (Introduction to Reading in www.reading.org). Reading is not

only read the text correctly in good pronunciation and vocal; however reading is to understand the meaning and the purpose of the text.

The students were bored with English lesson, especially in reading class. The text took a long time to read and the task was a lot. The activities in reading class usually only read the text, and then do the task. The students also tend to ignore difficult vocabulary and long text. They were more interested in chatting with their friend than joining the activities in a reading class.

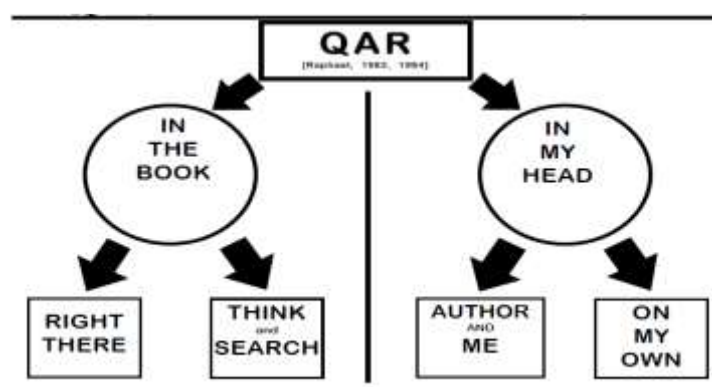
Based on the problems arising in the classroom, the writer wanted to use Question-Answer Relationships to solve it. Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) is a reading strategy that has a purpose to help students figure out how to answer questions based on a given text. It makes the reading process become simpler.

QAR helps students develop an awareness of the multiple source of information in their reading. When students are consciously aware of the different sources of information available to answer the questions, they became strategic in their reading and thinking, and their comprehension is improved.

QAR is a reading strategy that has aim to help students figure out how to answer questions based on a given text. QAR can help

solving student's problem in understanding the reading text and shorten their time to read a text. They can read effectively and

efficiently. There are four levels of questions, dividing into two sections based on the location of the answers.



Picture 1 Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) written in a scheme

“In the Book” classified into *“Right There”* and *“Think and Search”*. According to Marry Shelley on Frankenstein in enotes.com, *“Right There”* requires students to go back to the passage and find the correct information to answer question. The answer will be found in one place, one page, one paragraph, perhaps even in one sentence. The reader can point to the answer *“Right There”* in the text.

“Think and Search” requires students to think about how ideas and information in the passage related to the other. The answer will still be in the text, but the details necessary to answer the questions may be in more than one location. To answer the question effectively, the reader will have to *“think and search”* throughout the text.

“In My Head Question” classified into *“Author and Me”* and *“On My Own”*. Based on Literacypathway.wikispaces.com, *“Author and Me”* require students to use ideas and information that is not stated directly in the passage to answer the question. Students have to analyze some aspect of the text to derive meaning. This may be the theme, tone, mood, etc. These questions are based on information provided in the text but the students need to relate it to their own experience. Although the answer does not lie directly in the text, the student must have read it in order to answer the question. Otherwise in simple, the answer is not in the text. However the reader must read the text to get the information provided by the author then add personal

knowledge in order to answer the question.

“On My Own” can be answered using the reader background knowledge on a topic. The reader reflects on the meaning of some aspect derived from the text but is not tied to the text directly. This question can be answered even without reading the text. The text serves only as a springboard for a discussion of a much broader significance. *“On My Own”* usually was asked to students as pre-reading or in BKOF stage to build the students’ knowledge of a text.

QAR takes time to develop with students. Students will need a fair amount of instruction and guided practice using QAR. Teacher should give many examples to use this strategy. First step is explaining QAR to students. Second is demonstrating it. Teachers must use clear example to differentiate the types of questions. Third, guide students to apply the strategy. Teacher control the class in applying QAR and has to be active in guiding the students. Fourth, practice QAR individually or in a small group. The last, do it in several times to make the students know Question-Answer Relationships Strategy well.

By applying QAR the students are expected to use their time well during the reading class. QAR also helps students develop an

awareness of the multiple source of information in their reading. When students are consciously aware of the different sources of information available to answer the questions, they became strategic in their reading and thinking, and their comprehension is improved.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method in this research is Classroom Action Research. According to Nunan (1992: 229), “Action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry carried out by practitioners, aimed at solving problems, improving practice, or enhancing understanding”. It means that action research is dealing with the improvement in solving problem by practitioners.

In doing action research, a researcher must follow the procedures. According to Kemmis and Taggart, the procedure of each step can be explained as follows: 1) Identify the Problem (Plan): The first thing to do when making a project is by identifying the problems, and then the researcher can make a plan to do the research; 2) Implementation of the Action: The researcher carried out the action by teaching reading based on lesson plan; 3) Observation: The researcher as the teacher observed the students’ activities when teaching learning activity was implemented; 4) Reflecting: After doing the teaching learning process,

the researcher cited the result of the activities happens in classroom as the reflection of action.

The techniques used for collecting the data are qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were collected from observation, interview, field note and photograph, while quantitative data consist of tests.

After collecting the data the writer then analyzed the data. According Burns (1999:157), there are five stages of analyzing data include: 1) Assembling the data: The researcher collects the data from field notes, interview, photograph and test that have been collected over the period of the research; 2) Coding the data: Coding is a process of attempting to reduce the large amount of data that were collected to more manageable categories and concepts, themes or type. The researcher coded the data gotten from field notes and interview; 3) Comparing the data: Comparison can be made to see whether themes or pattern are repeated or developed across different data gathering techniques; 4) Building Interpretation: Researcher move beyond: describing, categorizing, coding and comparing, to make sense the meaning of the data; 5) Reporting the outcomes: The final stage, the researcher involves presenting an account of the research for others.

The quantitative data will be presented as the mean of pre-test and post-test. The researcher analyzed the score of pre-test (before implementing Question-Answer Relationships) and post-test (after implementing Question-Answer Relationships). The researcher compares the mean score of both tests to know the improvement in students' reading comprehension.

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The research has been held in SMP Negeri 8 Surakarta in academic year 2011/2012. The writer conducted the research in two cycles. Cycle one consisted in four meetings and cycle two in three meetings.

Lesson plan in each cycle focusing on improving student's reading comprehension by using Question-Answer Relationships (QAR). The material based on English syllabus for 8th grade of Junior High School: Recount text.

In cycle one, teaching learning activity started with greeting and called the roll. Then the writer as the teacher gave the students the text. After that she did brainstorming by asking the students the topic of the text. After brainstorming stage the writer asked the students to read the text quickly and asked if there are

some difficult words. After that she divided the students into group of four and explained how to use QAR in answering the questions. Then she asked the students to practice by differentiate the kinds of questions using QAR, and then use it to answer the questions. She approached one group to other group. Asking if they can use QAR or not and helping by giving them brief explanation of QAR. Finally the lesson closed by reviewing the material given and saying goodbye.

There are some weaknesses in cycle one, they are students' lacking in vocabulary and identifying "*QAR: Think and Search*" and "*QAR: Author and Me*". The main problem is the vocabulary. Therefore in cycle two, the step in delivering material in class is the same with cycle one, however the writer gave concentration in vocabulary, especially in the changing of present participle to past participle in past tense. The writer explained past tense in more detail and gave them the task about past tense. The other problem is identifying "*QAR: Think and Search*" and "*QAR: Author and Me*". QAR is about practice. It has to change the core of the way students read and answer reading question. Therefore the writer emphasized in practicing QAR. By practicing QAR in group, the students can share their opinion and discussed with friends.

Based on the result of the observation and the test from cycle one and two, it can be seen that the students' reading comprehension were increasing. They could comprehend the indicators of reading by using QAR, such as: finding main idea; finding explicit information; finding implicit information; and guessing information from the text.

The research finding shows two main points such as: 1) Improvement in students' reading comprehension and 2) Improvement in class situation.

1) Improvement students reading comprehension

The findings of the study showed that the use of Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) improves students' reading comprehension. Their ability improves from cycle to cycle. It can be seen through the improvement of all reading aspects or indicators: finding main idea, implicit information, and explicit information and guess information from the text. The students' ability in comprehending such text improved because they were taught to read and answer the questions in an effective way. QAR is a strategy that can help the reader become efficient in reading.

First, QAR "*In My Head: On My Own*" would help them to build the information of the reading topic. The teacher asked the students several questions which arouse their interest in knowing more about the text. Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF) is very useful in reading. BKOF help the teacher to make more interaction with the students in the reading class and help student to be more ready in receiving new text and vocabulary. It is stated by Michael Lewis and James Hill in Practical Technique for Language Teaching (1997:108).

Second, QAR "*In the Book: Right There*" helps the students to answer the explicit question effectively. The questions which use this strategy are WH- questions, such as What, Where, When, and Who.

Third, QAR "*In the Book: Think and Search*" helps the students to answer finding main idea and implicit information. The students have to think the answer and then search the answer in the text by using scanning and skimming technique. The answer will still be in the text, however the details necessary to answer the questions maybe in more than one location. The students need to summarize it. This question usually requires the reader to

think about idea and information in the passage relate to each other. Therefore the students have to "think and search" throughout the text and will need to look back at the passage, find the information and then think about how the ideas fit together.

Fourth, QAR "*In My Head: Author and Me*" helps the students in guessing information. The students guess the answer by collect the clue and information in the text. "*Author and Me*" question requires the students to use ideas and information that is not stated directly in the passage to answer the questions. The students have to analyze some aspect of the text to get the meaning. These questions are based on information provided in the text; however the students need to relate it to their own knowledge and experience.

QAR helps students in recognizing whether or not information is present in the text and, if not, that it is necessary to read "between or beyond the lines" to answer. In addition, QAR helps the students in changing the way of thinking to read a reading text. It can change the frame of student's thinking.

QAR successfully helps the students improve their reading comprehension. QAR which the

teacher implemented could improve the students' reading comprehension. This finding is supported by the research result stated in pre-test and post-test 2, that the students' average scores of each indicator improved. The mean score between the pre-test and post-test in cycle 1 improves 7.5 point from 58.3 to 65.8. Then it improves 7.1 point in post-test in cycle 2 to 72.9.

2) The improvement of class situation

The previous reading class was passive and static. The students felt bored in joining the lesson. Therefore the writers used video in brainstorming stage to make the class became relax before the writer explained QAR.

Besides using video in brainstorming, the use of QAR is very useful to give the students more attention to the lesson, because they were rarely given such kind of strategy to do a reading text by their English teacher.

QAR requires the students to change their way of thinking. It seem difficult at first, but by the time it can optimize the student' time in answering the question and more importantly, in understanding the text. The main problem of the students is that they read physically, but did not

know what they read. They could not get information from such a text.

The writer used group discussion in applying QAR. It was intended to help the students in sharing and discussing their difficulty in understanding QAR to their friends in a group. Moreover the writer can control their discussion by explained them the strategy directly from one group to the other.

However the fact showed that QAR also has some disadvantages, such as QAR needs a lot of practice and teacher needs more time to prepare the lesson. QAR change the way of students' thinking in reading and understanding the text. It is expected that they can be aware of many source of information to support the understanding. It is a difficult task to do because it related to students' habit in reading and understanding the text; therefore QAR need more practice and drilling. The teacher also need more time to prepare the material. On *QAR "In My Head: On My Own"*, the teacher needs to find interesting material for brainstorming, i.e. picture or video, to attract students' attention. Furthermore she also needs more energy because she has to apply group discussion in teaching QAR to students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the observation, the writer concluded that teaching using Question-Answer Relationships encouraged the students to be more active in class and communicative during teaching learning process. Moreover the students showed the result that they made positive improvement in reading comprehension.

Most importantly from the writer' observation and some exercises conducted during the research, the students' reading comprehension was improved from cycle to cycle. They did fewer mistakes in answering reading comprehension question. They also knew the effective way to comprehend text and answer questions related to the indicators of reading comprehension. The students' reading achievement also improved from the pre-test to post-test.

Moreover, they had lack of motivation because of the teacher technique in teaching which still teacher centered. The students' low reading comprehension was closely related to this problem. By using the new and effective strategy, the students seemed to be more motivated and actively involved in the lesson.

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